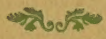
Harvest of Youth



By EDWARD DAVISON

E Selyn Perkins

Harvest of Youth

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HARVEST OF YOUTH *by* EDWARD DAVISON
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B-A

Inscribed in gratitude
admiration and affection
to
J. B. Priestley

Preface

THE poems in this book have been arranged in what is perhaps the least arbitrary order—that is, the order in which they were written. It will be seen from the index that they cover a period of about eight years. Forty-two are now printed in book form for the first time and the whole present collection contains all that now seem to me worth preserving of several hundred poems I have written since I was eighteen. I am indebted to the editors of the following periodicals: in England, the *London Mercury*, the *New Statesman*, the *Weekly Westminster Gazette*, *Land and Water*, the *Outlook*, the *Saturday Review*, the *English Review*, the *Spectator*, the *Challenge*, the *Cambridge Review*, the *Guardian*, the *Eagle*, my old college magazine, and *Form;* in America to the *Saturday Review of Literature*, *Harper's Magazine*, the *Outlook*, *Poetry*, the *Bookman* and *Contemporary Verse*. I must also thank many anthologists who have taken toll of these poems, notably Mr. Walter de la Mare in

"Come Hither," Mr. J. C. Squire (to whom I owe more than I can ever hope to repay) in his "Selections" and "Second Selections from Modern Poets," and Mr. Stanton A. Coblentz in his "Contemporary English Verse."

EDWARD DAVISON

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HARVEST OF YOUTH

Lights on the Tyne

OLD lights that burn across the Tyne at night,
And in its shadowy bosom peer and swim,
Each in your ancient place—in summer, bright,
In winter, dim:

Old lights that specked the bank of dark until
The quivering river drank your scattered gleams
Into its glass, and let the colours spill
Among my dreams:

When I came down from Tynemouth, ten years old,
Aspiring, penniless and fresh of tongue,
How you lit up my little woes with gold
Since I was young.

At Tyne Dock

THERE were no trees upon our Avenue:
The gutters stank. At Number Sixty-two
Mr. and Mrs. Pile and thirteen kids
Lived in two rooms (whose walls were coffin lids),
And Mrs. Behrsing kept a seamen's home
In six rooms at the largest corner house;
Stood at the door in her old dirty blouse,
Smoked a clay pipe, and drank unwatered rum.

But I sat still and watched my mother cry,
Or read Hans Andersen without a care,
And some old tale about the golden hair
Of a Princess that swept across the sky
Netting the stars, and heard the drunken crew
Fight and curse Christ upon the Avenue.

Gabriel in Eden

ETERNAL season of the changeless leaf,
Hushing bright Eden in the sunlit space
Of day with all that Heaven has known of peace,
Whose silence was but heightened by the streams
Murmuring, and the song-birds and the flowers,
The rapid insects and the fervid beasts,
And all calm sense of sight and sound and smell—
What great offence to the Almighty God
Wakes this strange tremor on thy darkening air
Till skylarks in the middle air cease singing,
And the young bees, dissuaded from their toil,
Seek their loud hives within the hollow tree?

O lovely Eden, whence the ruinous clouds
That drift and surge across thy failing sun?
Lo! startled birds seek covert with outcry,
And all the beasts are huddled in the gloom
Of powerful branches, cowering afraid.

. . . . . .

Wield ye the fiery sword, O Cherubim,
The Outcast of Archangels comes again!

A Barn by the Tillingbourne

IT stands by the valley of the stream,
Gray and very lonely, in a place
Where Silence is the minister to Dream,
And Beauty is the mark upon its face.

The death's-head moths shimmer on the moon,
Dark bats flit across the broken eaves,
And there in a fantastical festoon
The moving shadows fall of many leaves.

Forgotten of the world except by me,
Slowly the old barn crumbles into clay;
The nights shine still upon it starrily,
Quietly the seasons pass away.

To R. V. L.

(In Hampden Church)

IN shade and silence lain
Where earth and heaven meet,
We were the living twain,
The dead were at our feet.

And O the common thought
To think in that still place
That sooner than we sought
We might lie face to face

With reckonings uncast,
The due, the gain, the loss,
Forgetful at the last
Beneath a hasty cross:

And no white monument
To tell a little fame,
The wayfare that you went,
The letters of my name.

The Lost Mistress

SHE has passed by in the receding file
Of women lost, where the remembering years
Fade in the youth of love. There was a smile
Shining within her eyes behind the tears.

O statelier than Helen, statelier
Than Cressida with all her careless vows,
She stands where Lilith and Delilah are
With the hair gathered from their splendid brows.

"Grieve not for any honour you may mar
In that great company, but love again:
Troilus and Menelaus my playmates are,
Adam and Samson; they were noble men."

The Trees

I DID not know your names and yet I saw
The handiwork of Beauty in your boughs;
I worshipped as the Druids did, in awe,
Feeling at Spring my pagan soul arouse
To see your leaf-buds open to the day,
And dull green moss upon your rugged girth,
The hoary sanctity of your decay,
Life and Death glimmering upon the Earth.

After the Rain

COOL fields have drunk the drowsy rain,
And clouds the silver sun;
They shake him out below again
And the dusk has begun.

Sweet smells the earth and sweet the grass,
The shower-shadows fill
The distant sky like bars, and pass
Away behind the hill.

The crawling furrows steam with heat,
The sodden meadows smoke,
The valley where their vapours meet
Is covered with a cloak.

Not from this hilltop's knuckled fist
Shall any challenge go,
Nor from these peaceful tents of mist
Shall any bugle blow.

But there may sound a twilight chime,
A hidden fox may bark,
A chattering squirrel nestward climb,
Or a bird sing in the dark.

The Sunken City

GLITTERS no scale nor any fin
Between these blind basaltic walls,
The seaweeds wave about within
The water of the pillared halls.

Light's essence in the gloomy sea
Through opal strained and emerald,
Tinges the spread anemone,
And pearls of milk and rings of gold.

But in this watery depth no more
Shall sunlight break the sunken dusk,
No vagrant beam of stars explore
The secrets of the city's husk.

And when the climbing tentacles
Of some sleep-swimming octopus
Disturb a ruined temple's bells,
And set the deep sea clamorous,

The ships that ride a league above
Hear not those drownéd chimes, nor know
That where their great propellers move
Atlantis lies a league below.

Sonnet I

POEMS, when all life's tutelage is done,
And you, my golden trumpets, shake the air,
When all my days are funeralled in one,
And hope and love lie buried with despair:
When from these battlefields fair cities rise
And golden crops shine on this shattered soil,
And over fleets of sunken merchandise
Great ships go riding home with richer spoil:
Let strong storms beating down the wounded dark
Swallow the land where once my life was played,
And lightning lay the clouded heaven stark
Over the ruin where my grave is made;
And let my spirit fare the thunder through
Singing aloud to earth, alive in you.

London Fog

WHEN the fog sinks around him, cloud on cloud,
The friendless man abandons every aim.
His eyesight fails him and his sense is cowed
For no one knows his face or speaks his name
In all the fading thousands of the crowd:
He cares not where he goes nor whence he came.

Now is he lost amid the baffling night,
Misshapen wraiths of shadows round him loom;
He stumbles lamely to some blur of white
Where warning voices through the darkness boom.
On a dim spiral stair his feet alight
And he descends into the dwindling gloom.

Hushed in the pit the clamour all abates,
Numb and astonished roams his sense around;
Light splits the mist above, and as he waits
Falls from the shaft a drawn and windy sound,
And pale-faced people staring through the gates
Of lifts descending on the Underground.

A Statue of Sleep

HER face is masked in sorrow; loveliest
Of all Italia's goddesses whose fame
Was housed in sculptured stone, or found a rest
In the round syllables of a classic name.

In her close company I breathe her breath
And kiss her kiss: she wantons with all men.
Her everlasting presence is deep death,
But in her visitation there's no pain.

Yet aches my sense at her long absences;
I pray her at the eve for courtesy.
She hears—and O the passionate excess
When in the stealthy dawn she comes to me!

The Prodigal

COME home! Our eyes grow feeble now,
Our hope is like a dream,
A stranger guides the rusted plough
And drives the sturdy team.

And the frost prowls abroad tonight
Upon the moonless air,
And there's nothing in the firelight
To tell us how you fare.

Long shadows flicker on the wall
And crawl across the floor,
But never any knock at all
Sounds at the ready door.

Slow hours invade the lonely day
And sleep deserts the night;
Unpausing seasons pass away
While gray hairs turn to white.

And when you cross the sunlit hill
Some noon in a new Spring,
The low-rooved cottage will be still—
Somewhere a bird may sing,

And you will see the rotting thatch,
The garden still and bare,
And you perhaps may lift the latch,
But no one will be there.

Sonnet II

THE snare of sorrowing beauty breaks at last—
Pity for tears, sweeter than any smile,
And all the praise of speech are overcast
When loveliness has lived its little while:
And passions lay their changing moods aside,
Promise forgets the least of things he said,
The swift years quench the pleasure of high pride
And ruin all the majesty they made.
Let Love today be done some cruel wrong
And Loyalty awhile become remiss,
Rebuke can be forbidden by a song,
Unfaithfulness forgiven for a kiss:
But were thy beauty now what it shall be
Pardon might not be bought so easily.

In Judaea

THE Bride of God has lain her head
At rest on Joseph's knee,
In hush of sleep her breath is dead,
Her hair falls loose and free;
And Joseph smooths its rippling strands
Tenderly in his coarse great hands.

He thinks of sunny Nazareth
When Mary kissed him first,
Ere for God's love she brake her faith,
And lest his heart should burst
He turns his eyes away once more
From Jesus smiling by the door.

The Mind Besieged

A LONELY castle was this Mood of mine
Whose anxious ramparts challenged wind
and cloud,
Mountain and moon with banners leonine.

But the battalions of Event abide
In sleepless siege around, and all the proud
And weary garrison is stupefied;

And only from that brooding citadel
On the dark battlements resounds aloud
Some failing tread of Thought, the sentinel.

Nocturne

BE thou at peace this night
Wherever be thy bed,
Thy slumbering be light,
The fearful dreams be dead
Within thy lovely head;
God keep thee in His sight.

No hint of love molest
Thy quiet mind again;
Night fold thee to her breast
And hush thy crying pain;
Let memory in vain
Conspire against thy rest.

So may thy thoughts be lost
In the full hush of sleep.
Lest any sight accost
Thine eyes to make them weep
In darkness buried deep
For ever be my ghost.

The Phoenix

WHO sayeth Love shall cease?
Though the flame fold her fast,
This fire is not her last;
Not in this ash, aghast,
Shall Phoenix find her peace.

Password

FALLS from a cloud the singing bird
Into her nest of grass;
Say to me but a single word
And I will let you pass.

Between her winking stars the moon
Pauses beyond the hill,
Whisper that word . . . O whisper soon
And pass me if you will!

The wood grows darker, quieter
Than ever yet it was;
One word among the whisperless air
And I will let you pass.

Listened the waiting leaves all night,
Shadow and bush and mound;
The high moon shed a softer light,
There was not any sound.

The Swan

THE swan has sailed down from her islet nest;
Sailed slowly down in an uncertain dream
Of shallow waters and a resting moon,
Shadows inert and silences asleep,
To keep her tryst. The river through the woods
Offers no ripple to her moving breast;
Through drifting weeds and lily-leaves she sails
Into the clearer stream, and under her
The faint reflection of her beauty swells—
Strong wings like shells, broad fans of feather, ribbed
And folded close in easy layers, laid
And shut against the steep mount of her back;
Her long neck curving and her head erect,
Held in a pride of pose in silhouette
Against the dusky osiers behind.
From her soft breast the shadows all divide;
The water might be hollow holding her,
For wheresoe'er she swims, though swift or slow,
She cannot change its calm . . .
Even the silence seems to follow her.

Now pausing in the clear mid-stream she drifts
To gradual rest. Her slender neck released

Lifts in advancing undulation up
Towards the sky. Effortless wings unfold
To reawaken the night wind and dash
The river into cloudy foam, until,
Trampling with unseen feet the water-top,
She sways, distending pinion, neck and plume
In frantic luxury of splendour!—Then
With harsh and travelling cry that climbs the night
Subsides into the stream again, and now
The air is hushed around her; clear and calm
The water grows and silence mantles it
And shadow, and the halting moon moves on.

Reverie

MY moods are mountains looming in dark skies
And all my thoughts their clouds;
Deep valley lakes are my long reveries
Such as a forest shrouds.

And you are a strong storm blowing from heaven;
Your thunders sound and shake;
Before your beating winds the gloom is driven
From mountain, cloud and lake.

In This Dark House

I SHALL come back to die
From a far place at last,
After my life's carouse
In the old bed to lie
Remembering the past
In this dark house.

Because of a clock's chime
In the long waste of night,
I shall awake and wait
At that calm, lonely time
Each sound and smell and sight
Mysterious and innate:—

Some shadow on the wall
When curtains by the door
Move in a draught of wind;
Or else a light footfall
In a near corridor;
Even to feel the kind
Caress of a cool hand
Smoothing the draggled hair
Back from my shrunken brow,
And strive to understand

The woman's presence there,
And whence she came, and how.

What gust of wind that night
Will mutter her lost name
Through windows open wide,
And twist the flickering light
Of a sole candle's flame
Smoking from side to side,
Till the last spark it blows
Sets a moth's wings aflare
As the faint flame goes out?

Some distant door may close;
Perhaps a heavy chair
On bare floors dragged about
O'er the low ceiling sound,
And the thin twig of a tree
Knock on my window-pane
Till all the night around
Is listening with me,
While like a noise of rain
Leaves rustle in the wind.

Then from the inner gloom
The scratching of a mouse
May echo down my mind

And sound around the room
In this dark house.

The vague scent of a flower
Smelt then in that warm air
From gardens drifting in,
May slowly overpower
The vapid lavender,
Till feebly I begin
To count the scents I knew
And name them one by one,
And search the names for this.

Dreams will be swift and few
Ere that last night be done,
And gradual silences
In each long interim
Of halting time awake,
All conscious sense confuse:
Shadows will grow more dim,
And sound and scent forsake
The dark, ere dawn ensues.

In the new morning then,
So fixed the stare and fast,

The calm unseeing eye
Will never close again.

. . . . . .

I shall come back at last,
In this dark house to die.

Sonnet III

TONIGHT in weariness remembering thee
My heart leapt up in the forbidding gloom
And every shadow in the firelit room
Spake of thy peace and beauty unto me:
Then did I murmur to them quietly
The love I may not utter or assume
But the words echoed back, as in a tomb
Death, answering Life, might whisper *Vanity!*

And I forgot the promise of thine eyes
Afterwards when the second silence came;
My unavailing patience I forgot.
I stood before thee calling twice and thrice
The ruin of thy soft bewildering name,
And thou didst hear me then but answered not.

Sunday at Kensington

TONIGHT already is a worn-out dream,
The memory of elusive lights that gleam
Through a dim mist o'er roads that have no end,
And solitudes that hold not any friend.

The din of booming bells at a far distance;
A girl who hurried past; the tired persistence
Of hollow echoes following the feet;
Some cautious motor throbbing down a street.

Thou poor unhappy heart! Shall aimless walking
Lose sorrow on the way? In thy steps stalking
Her shadow hunts thee, mocking thou should'st deem
Tonight already as a worn-out dream.

Crabbed Age and Youth

FILL the groom's deep chalice full
Ere his agéd blood be dried,
For his eyes are glazed and dull
As they feed upon the bride,
And the day, ashamed to die,
Reddens at her secret cry.

Let the guests be fully fed,
Bring the daughter of despair,
Deck the snowy bridal bed,
Scatter blossom everywhere:
Sacrifice must be begun
Soon beyond the set of sun.

Till among the sunny gleams
When the singing morning breaks
She can quench her angry dreams
With her years ere he wakes.
She will see him lying there,
She will know he found her fair.

He may look across his wine
In the quiet of his age,

He may ponder—"She is mine!"
He may lock her golden cage:
She can look at him and laugh,
She can make his epitaph.

Colin Clout's Come Home Again

COLIN Clout's come home again,
Loping up the rutted lane,
Past the farmhouse and the pool,
Smiling at the village fool,
Past the thatched and yarded stack
With his bundle on his back.
Little girls in gingham frocks
Played around the pillar-box;
Colin spoke to them and passed,
For he's come back home at last.

Nancy, now that Colin's here,
Take the jug and get some beer;
Then put on your pinafore,
Heat the oven, shut the door,
Take your biggest apples down,
Bake the dumplings crisp and brown.
Colin kissed you when he came,
Called you by your pretty name,
And he gave you a new shawl—
Colin hasn't changed at all!

Wind the clock up, make a stir,
Busier be and busier

Till his supper's done, and then
Just you kiss him back again!
Say it's time to go to bed,
Wrap your apron round your head,
Scramble up your cottage stairs,
Turn the lamp out, say your prayers:
Tell God that the best of men,
Colin Clout's come home again.

Demobilisation. 1919.

To a Girl at the Seeley Library

WHEN with crouched shoulders and attentive head
You droop, lovely, above a sullen page,
So ill your eyes expend their wealth of power
Beauty might mourn her wasted heritage:
Yet all the careful wisdom you have read
Lies like the dust upon a thirsty flower.

For I have heard you in clear reveries
Laughing across the Downs, and we have swung
Down Pen-y-Pas together and lain still
On Cleadon when the lark below us sung,
And sunlight rippled to your eager eyes,
And winds went tumbling down the sleepy hill.

A Prospect of Retrospect

WHEN I think how time will pass
Until this Now is changed to Then,
Like smoke that fades within a glass
Seem the curled fancies of my pen.

For this year's sturdy discontent
Will read in words a boy mis-spelled,
When I have weighed the Much life meant
Against the Little that it held.

Epitaph

HERE a pure lady gave the dust
Her body, and the flowers her breath,
And yet had beauty left to thrust
A further dignity on Death.

Once —

ONCE in the Spring of Youth I swore
"Though all this love prove bitter yet
Clear memory for evermore
Will sweeten each sad thought of it."

And now with that long sickness past
I scarce remember or believe
I ever thought that it could last,
And grieve because I cannot grieve.

Enter Peace

COME faltering stranger through the open door
With shy and gentle footstep entering
The house of Thought. Thick shadows mat the floor,
Heavily burns the lamp to the moth's wing:
The hesitant silence sighs
Like a child asleep whose dream passes and dies.

Be rested now. The late hour chimes an end,
The doors are sealed and all the curtains drawn.
Quiet, quiet am I. The silks depend
From your white shoulders and the slow flames fawn
Upon your cloudy hair
Pilfering light from the soft tresses there.

Let us be still even as lovers sleeping
With this full silence for our bridal bed:
Stealthily are the dark companions creeping,
Shadow and shadow past your drooping head;
And now the faint lamp's flame
Wavers and whitens when I speak your name.

There is no time within this room of ours,
No sun to sweep day onward to nightfall;
There is no hungry clock to spend the hours
With callous hand and face; no moondial
  Of the fantastic brain
To point the darkness to the west again.

The lamp's last tremulous light can never fail us,
This fire shall burn for ever still untended;
We shall remain—no moment can assail us,
Our wealth of silence cannot be expended:
  Eternity must pass
Ere you can cry *Farewell!* or I *Alas!*

Fool's Song

NOW between moon and moon
Even the fool grows old
And his laughter dies:
For the bells rust as the bells must
When the tale is overtold,
And soon, soon
Even the fool grows wise.

Now between sleep and sleep
The merriest eye turns dim
And the warm heart cold:
For the wits rust as the wits must
And the lips that laughed look grim.
O weep, weep!—
Even the fool grows old.

Ghosts

BY the dark fire when I was a child
Two shadows used to stand,
Turning and bending, left and right,
One on either hand.

They held thin fingers over their eyes
If I sat up awake,
My timid hand might not move out
But their strange heads would shake.

Night after night through year and year
They watched me over my book,
I did not dare to raise my head
Lest they should meet my look.

And seven times in the winter week,
When I climbed up to bed,
I saw a heavier shadow still
That stood at the stairhead.

It had no shape, it made no sound,
There by the wall it leant,
And everywhere in the windy house
The wood creaked as I went.

I was afraid. They came all three
Following to my room,
Beyond the ring of candlelight
They haunted the high gloom.

But if they watched me stir in dream
I did not know to weep:
Three still guardians stood at my foot—
Silence, Starlight and Sleep.

Stanzas Written in Dejection on My Twenty-second Birthday

NOW I am twenty-two and yesterday
Seems farther away than fifty years to come.
Nothing's achieved: I am impotent as clay,
As a stone I am dumb.

Let me lie down, tired as the child I was
When slumber found me in my mother's room,
And night went darkly by without a pause
To wake me in the gloom.

Impulsive thoughts spin dreams to vex my sleep,
My thudding heart arouses me afraid,
Over my limbs I feel chill fingers creep,
Cold lips on mine are laid.

The leaning moonbeams glitter past my head
And freeze the fallen shadows where they lie,
I feel a body turning in the bed—
And yet it is not I.

What do I fear? O mystical disease,
Ceaseless unrest of body, heart and brain,
Would I were young that night might bring to
these
Some quiet sleep again!

Any Street

BEAUTY has walked in the broad light
By night and day since Time began,
In the bright road to left and right
Free to the sight of Everyman.

I was a fool today, too blind
To see her, naked though she was.
Suddenly I looked behind
Fearful because I let her pass.

Blind

THE blind man knows the sun because of its noise,
And in the quiet he has thought of the moon.
To him the river is but a whisper among sounds,
And the trees in the wind and the rain in the leaves
Are one and the same sound.
He has crumbled the snow in his fingers,
And bared his head to the spring rain;
He is afraid of the velvet of cushions,
The rustle of silk makes his body cold;
Roses he knows, and many flowers by their smell,
And he can feel the time on the face of the clock.

There is nothing beautiful or unbeautiful,
But he knows better than all men
The hard and the soft,
The quiet and the loud.
Dark and light are words in a dream
And colour is the silence at the end.

The Lamp

(To Alec Macdonald)

SOON with the day-long labour done again
The Solitary turns towards his bed
Where the sleep-smothering thoughts besiege his brain
And the old passions die uncomforted.
O lamp that burnest bright,
Guard thou his secrets through the quiet night!

Be thy deep flood in his dark sleep distinct:
There in the trembling shadow all things seem,
But no thing is. The light of moons extinct
That burn for him the purest flame of dream
Illuminates thee now;
Priest of his spiritual peace art thou.

O flower of light within whose single sphere
The insubstantial spirit of thy kind
Seems centred now—bright Lamp, thou blendest here
Thy thousand forms, and all in one combined
By thee are typified:
A thousand nights in thee are memoried.

Even thus in hours of unrelenting gloom
Thy softening presence blessed the bed of death:
Thus art thou sentinel in the recent tomb
Where the Black Enemy inhabiteth
  The swelling depth below,
Yawning upon thy light that fadeth low.

There the last glow-worm, thine inheritor,
Lights at thy faltering beam his feeble spark,
And agéd bats on blundering wings explore
The silence, bristling in the empty dark;
  And thou in rust and mould
Art set within thy bracket, quenched and cold.

And dedicate lives have sacrificed to thee
A daily ministry of prayer and psalm
In odorous temples where the middle sea
Or Asian temples with eternal calm
  Kept the hush't ritual,
And precious oils thy light made mystical.

Thou in the Halls of Solomon hast slept,
And in the Holy-of-Holies, at the font
Shone thy continual light. While Hero wept
Over Leander by the Hellespont;
  The vestal virgins saw
And tended thee with innocence and awe.

Even thou subdued in the Arabian night
Trembled with that white bride the Caliph heard
Through many a fabulous moon of sad delight
Till dawn again the endless tale deferred:
And every poet else
Gazed on thee in his hour of murmurous spells.

And thee in his divine, acceding hours
Often the lover quenched in the night-tide,
And when thy beauty closed, shy as a flower's,
Embraced another whence thy light had died:
And thou, love's twinborn star,
Hid thy frail head away from the long war.

Thou with slow sandglass and pale moondial
Hast marked the hours in many another room
When overtaking sleep was ripe to fall
On the bent head within the studious gloom:
All patient didst thou look
Past the drooped shoulder on the tilted book.

And here thou watchest for the tardy dawn,
Inert and silent, even as of old
Dim, ere thy last uncertain flame withdrawn
Leaves yet another story all untold,
Another secret dead,
And a great darkness where thy light was shed.

"Between Heaven & Charing Cross"

WHEN the silence guards thy breath
And a darkness hides thy head,
Doubt, a paler shape than Death,
Draws me dreaming from thy bed.

Softly do I seek the street
Where the unhappy shadows move,
Pacing on intent to meet
The spirit that I still might love.

I dream of calm that has not been
And never can be till I find
The long withheld, the still unseen,
The spiritual mistress mind.

Thou sleepest through oblivion
Where no lost step can echo in,
While thy pale sisters one by one
Tread the footworn moonlight thin.

Their bright shoes glimmer as they pass,
Their writhen shadows ebb and flow
From lamp to lamp as in a glass
Upon the shining flags below.

Sadly I scan each fading face
With a brief and steady glance,
Their dark dispiteous looks abase
My hope and turn my eyes askance.

They pass away in gradual waves
Down to the mine of darkness soon;
The houses stand like stones on graves,
The streets are empty in the moon.

Beyond an atmospheric wall
Thy dim and fearful lights decline,
And I come wondering after all
If that calm spirit can be thine.

The Torch-Bearer

HER house the fairer stands
Now all the doors are barred,
But hers were churlish hands
A fireless hearth to guard.

My torch will fade tonight
Before my knock sounds thin
And she in need of a light
Hastens to let me in;

And opens the door wide
Lit by a dim last spark
To see on the other side
Only the empty dark.

The Friend

BECAUSE my deeper heart commands,
Tonight I leave this house of men,
To find a brook to cleanse my hands,
And not to tread these streets again.

My old unhappy hope no more
Shall search a passing stranger's eyes
To find the light it fainted for
But never see that light arise.

And now at last my lips shall end
The long pretence of smile and speech,
For I will take that man for friend
Whose love I need not to beseech.

We two will labour all day long,
And sleep by night and rest at noon,
He will not mind my broken song
When we tread homeward in the moon.

He will be pure in heart, and I
Be strong in him, and in his trust
I shall not be a living lie:
He will be just and I be just.

And though thereafter if the dream
Hushed either heart within the breast,
Nor he nor I that hour would seem
To grudge the other's greater rest.

Union Debate

Cambridge, 1921

"That this House believes Democracy, as a form of government, has no future."

(For G. Granville Sharp)

TRINITY bell strikes eight upon the hour
From court to cloister, echoing down the stone
To dark St. Johns, eight times a second tone:
And softly now from distant steeple and tower
Low mingling chimes respond, and I who tread
Down the dim path, stop still. Like one alone
In a deep mine under a deeper sea
Who hears, or seems to hear, above his head
Some tempest plucking at the ocean's bed,
(His groaning roof), I listen. Over me
Another darkness droops, and over all,
Time's far-off, still-resounding whispers fall
And I pass onward. To my narrowed eyes
The spreading trambeams tremble as they rise
From the lit windows ere the half-doors swing
Behind me, and a hum of muttering
Ebbs from the inward hall like the pedal tone
Of a quiet organ, climbing in vaults of stone.

. . . Elsewhere have I heard this sound!
In the markets of man, the chaffering stalls of Shields,
Where the blazing oil is blown from the dripping flares;
I have heard it swell in the green Harton fields
When the crowds cheered from the distant football ground
Over Westoe Hill; and this in its hour like theirs
Shall perish away, though others awake again
Wherever on earth man meets with his fellow men.

. . . . . .

They are entering now and parting as they come,
Speakers and officers, all to their separate sides,
The Ayes and Noes, some with a smile and some
Grave as the President: he, ere the noise subsides,
Rises to order, and silence with sudden shock
Effortless falls but for the tick of the clock.

. . . . . .

I have seen mirrors from each opposite wall
Of a narrow room reflect themselves, the small
Within the great, when my white face between
Showed equally in either, through the sheen

Receding into dim infinity
And specular perspective, so to make
The perfect image of neutrality.
But did example mould the clay of the mind
Whose unimaginable thoughts mistake
In either glass the half that is defined
For the full figure, never would this House
Assemble or divide nor words arouse
The crying *Question!* that my lips awake.

. . . . . .

Thus force opposes force in shadowy war
For a vague dream of policy week by week.
Did Burke divine on his last election floor
The vanity of it all when he rose to speak?

. . . . . .

They are rising around me now on the ended
speech
Out of the shaft of the sense from the mine of the
mind,
Prophetic, stammering shadows that threaten,
beseech,
Plead, demand and decry. The blind are blaming
the blind!

The blind have battled the blind: the debating
ends.
But in that sad war of opinion I quailed tonight
That we with the rest divided, I and my best of
friends,
Turning like spectres apart to the left and the
right.

Sonnet IV

The Owl

BEYOND the inmost barriers of the brain,
Hid by the tree of thought's most secret bough,
While suns and moons of mood arise and wane,
Patience, the owl, considers wisdom now.
Her twin dark-closing eyes in safety keep
The present and the past, and for the rest
Shadow and silence blend themselves with sleep
Nestled against the oval of her breast.
Still motionless she ages, growing wise,
And day by day dreams on and never stirs,
Nor till the last leaf falls before her eyes
And the bare winter ends that peace of hers
Will she burst up into the startled night
Wailing on wings widespread for sudden flight.

I Know Not How

I KNOW not how in the night
The mind's doors open and close,
Nor if I have seen aright
The shadow that comes and goes;
So easily might a dream
Have shed on the wide eyesight
Some shade of the things that seem
To darken the outward light.

Therefore I follow thee not
O shadow of doubtful joy,
Perchance by a dream begot
My dearer dreams to destroy;
But rather beckoning sleep
To stop each gap of the sense
In darker night do I keep
My ceaseless indifference.

The Lovers

WILLOW and water! Would we were
Like those dear lovers all the year,
And our exchanging light and shade
As dark or bright reflection made,
Blending through mirrored rise or fall
And every windless interval.
Might we but touch as tender lip't
As they when first a ripple slip't
To kiss the downward dipping frond
That leaned above the river-pond
To close that envious space between
Lest any weed should intervene,
That Beauty over Beauty crouched
Might tremble in the thing it touched!
Would love like theirs were ours to live,
So delicate, so sensitive;
But neither sun nor moon shall see
Thy light in mine or mine in thee.

The Harvest Moon

SINCE I have seen the harvest moon
How heavy lies the fallow mind;
O Lord send forth Thy ploughmen soon
While yet the seeds are on the wind.

The Undying Heart

"OUTSOARING promise of dream and fancy
of rhyme
"Comes Love, all dreams to excel, all rhymes to
impart:
"Bear to abide for a while this desolate time,
"She will reward thee well" . . . said the undying
heart.

Then Love like a phantom came, and now she is
gone;
In one brief summer she passed: but fancy of
rhyme
And promise of dream remain like robes on her
throne.
The heart is a prophet yet. I abide the time!

O Hand Unseen

O HAND Unseen be gentle and kind to me,
Touch me in desperate hour
When I forget thy guidance; though I be
Impatient of thy power
Yet doth my heart elect
To turn along the way thou dost direct
To meet the ultimate end,
Content on thee, thee only, to depend.

Put forth thy healing fingers, close mine eyes
When on the hill of sleep
I stumble entangled in my memories,
And weep, or seem to weep,
Because of those uptorn—
O not alone the rose but even the thorn
That has her beauty too,
Lovelier far than ever yet I knew.

Wake me with urgent influence to the sun
With sleep's dark summit past.
O when the happy morning is begun
Be visible at last!

Descend in mantling light
Below the clouds till I behold thee bright
Where thou dost intervene,
Shed over me thy peace, O Hand Unseen!

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Shed over me thy peace, O Hand Unseen!

I Heard the Old Men

(Lines on being told I had all the illusions of youth)
(For Hubert and Grizel Hartley)

I HEARD the old men talk together,
Nodding grey heads one to another,
And dimly seen from my window sill
(So cool was dusk and the air so still)
The blue tobacco-cloud under me
Blossomed up from the vanishing tree
Till darkness gathered the phantom flower.
But under the leafage hour by hour
One to another I heard them say
'Yesterday—Yesterday—Yesterday!'

. . . . . .

It is all true that men born long ago
Pondered and spoke even as I do now,
Planning to mend earth's sorrows: even so
Do I. With earnest voice and anxious brow
Each learned life's lurking secrets from the wise,
Like me they loved, growing old in discontent,
Till young illusion faded from their eyes;
Beauty's mirage, brief and impermanent,
And first love's all-too-soon frustrated dream,

And impulse mocked, and hope and faith belied,
All that was highest in the heart's esteem
Betrayed, exhausted, hurt, unsatisfied.

It is not all a dream, though when I speak
The old men smile and cowardice defers;
Ambition, hope and love seem strangely weak
And perishable things,—poor travellers
Treading an alien land where the sea-mark
Looms in the mist obscure; and yet they know
It is not all illusion, though the dark,
Sonorous sea sucks at the rocks below
And men grow deaf in age.
I'll not believe
That time can quench the ardour of the heart
Or bate one impulse out of youth, or grieve
Its mocked ideal dream. I will not part
With any sympathy for common things
That yesterday thought beautiful or good,
Not one enthusiasm that beauty brings
Will I let sleep, but die within this mood
Rather than lose another love I had,
Having so few surviving yesterday.

It is not all a dream. I will be glad
That there's some spirit treading upon earth
(Though scarcely heard, yet felt in every breath

Of the free air), a spirit of rebirth
In their own sons for those who suffered death;
For there are poets wakening into song
And soldiers seeking peace on earth again;
I will believe in life while I am young
For once grown old there's no believing then.

. . . . . .

I heard the old men talk together,
Nodding grey heads one to another,
And dimly seen from my window-sill
(So cool was dusk and the air so still)
The blue tobacco-cloud under me
Blossomed up from the vanishing tree
Till darkness gathered the phantom flower.
But under the leafage hour by hour
One to another I heard them say
'Yesterday—Yesterday—Yesterday!'

Sonnet V

O THOU in the darkness far beyond the spheres
That seest me puny under the night below
Treading through destiny to death, forego
Thy triumph and glory for a score of years;
Leave me alive amid my hopes and fears,
The tempest of the mind, the joy, the woe,
That I may battle with myself and know
The worth of life though be it by bitter tears.

Set not Thy stars against me whether I prove
Evil or good, ere from my inward spirit
Beauty and truth depart, nor judge me less
In the full storm than in the calm thereof,
Yet from the circle of earth that I inherit
O lift the shadow of this long loneliness.

Sonnet VI

(After re-reading Shakespeare)

NOW I can never be myself again,
It is too late to live, too soon to die;
I am a poet made of many men
And each was far more beautiful than I.
This meagre candle pales before a sun
Too bright to bear, and now within the mind
My thoughts, like lamps put out, die one by one,
The very light has burst and I am blind.
Sorrow was mine long since and love and faith,
Companions sweet, sufficient for my need,
But these are treading on the heel of Death
And from all else but passion am I freed:
For never now, remembering his name,
Shall I put pen to poem save in shame.

Growth

"Thou makest his beauty to consume away."

THE body, moulded into life made dear
By anguish, blooms and sweetens for a year,
With love to minister and hands to guard
Ripens to tenderer beauty all unscarred;
A little while cleansed by the stainless sun
And formed for strength by sleep to swim or run.
The eyes awake to earth whose colours strive
From each horizon, warm and sensitive,
By light or dark inured to time and change,
The acres of the sunlight are their range
And the dim tract of night past moon and star
Dilates for them, and still they gaze afar.
Nor sight alone, but sound and taste and smell
Blend sentient, and the mind, a miracle,
Springs from the flesh to wonder at the earth
And dream itself eternal! Such is birth.

Yet many an age ere we with marvelling eyes
First built on earth our heaven of fantasies,
Men's sight grew dim to see how beauty waned,
And wisdom fed in strength, till earth regained
Her unimpoverished dust, but underground
Those dead hearts beat but beat without a sound.

Sonnet VII

Aftermath

LIFE was all calm last night, but for my heart
Whose storm no outward sign made visible;
Midway across the sky a bright star fell
Like Hope to the far verge, and soon athwart
The silence, seeming to cry loud *Depart!*
Eight long slow strokes chimed from a far-off bell,
Thy voice in the starlight woke me to farewell
And wave on wave I felt my sorrow upstart.

All's quiet now within, though lonely I tread
Thy fields, not unremembering, while the wind
Harries to storm the wrack around my head.
Maybe we'll meet no more; yet I'm resigned
And numb again and passionless as the dead:
Storm cannot shake me either in body or mind.

Happier Summer

COMPANIONED now by other men
The girls I knew live far away,
And I remember them again,
How they were lovely, lithe and gay,
How summer rippled to their eyes
And sweetened even the rose for joy
While I was still enough a boy
To mimic back the cuckoos' cries.

Never a summer came again
But woke my memory's bud to flower,
And maybe too those happy men
Ponder upon their own sweet hour;
For Fancy like a star returns
At last to all she gleamed upon,
And evermore the brighter burns
To find life fairer that she shone.

Evening Comes

EARLY to each forsaken street
Comes Evening, quiet and gray;
The shadows ripple down to meet
The rings of mist around her feet
And strip the light away.

Over each lamp with flickering kiss
She tarries to tend and trim;
She takes the death-bent moth's caress
With tears and her long silences
Deepen because of him.

She sprays the sky with stars, her glance
Flakes the blue rooves with frost;
The shadows throng at variance
Before her gradual advance,
A fitful, wavering host.

And silence from her breast is shed
Softer than featherfall,
Ere the braid slackens round her head
And all her dusky hair dispread
Slips down on roof and wall.

Celestial Architect! she shakes
Her moulding shadows down,
Till even the harshest outline breaks
To beauty; one by one she takes
The houses through the town—

And each rebuilds and beautifies
And melts beneath her hand
Till Night's remotest stars arise,
And then all suddenly she flies,
And darkness takes the land.

Gathering Primroses

NOW that the April has begun
The miracle of spring's complete,
The bubble has fallen from the sun
And burst in beauty at my feet.

The light is shaken over the land
In flakes that speck the fields and hills
Under the gatherer's dripping hand
With primroses and daffodils.

And I who carry the thought of you
So heavily with me far from home
Pluck the bright flowers from the dew
To send them where I cannot come.

The Unborn Son

THERE is a tremor on the hills,
The saplings stir within the wood,
The sunlight seeks the daffodils
And I forget the things I rued.

Cheered by the promise of the spring
I have foreseen my life's content,
Dreamed of a lovelier blossoming
Than ever April gave to Lent.

In some far fairer spring than this
Love will come home to me indeed;
My lips may waken in her kiss
A flower from the sleeping seed.

And may be in some wintry night
I shall wait helpless, no one by,
Nerved by anxiety's delight
To hear amid the wind a cry . . .

A cry that snaps the thought of death
And bursts the triple dark for me,
That with a glory in its breath
Proclaims my immortality.

The Vigil

BEAT on, dull bell! Mark me this feeble hour
That cannot come again . . . *Two* . . .
three . . . so soon!
And not an echo left to overpower
The silence of a night without a moon.

By what last vanity of hope deceived
Sought I to see her? Now that earth's a dream
To mock the minds of men who sleep aggrieved
By their own crippled hearts, at what extreme

Of mad imagining life am I who sought
Her house in this dark night? There's not a sound
That whispers louder than my silent thought
In all the world, even to the farthest bound.

How like a stone I stand, fixed, rigid, chill
And yet not senseless, for I heard the chime—
When matters nothing, though I listen still:
Maybe an hour's gone by . . . I'll count the time.

One minute . . . *two* . . . how dark the windows . . . *three* . . .
Her house how dark . . . *four now* . . . perhaps she'll wake

And look across. But she'll not wake for thee
Poor fool . . . *five*—let it go! . . . Not for thy
sake . . .

Never!—Though Time on the meridian stops
And thy long ranting's done; not waken then,
Though such another darkness downward drops
As this that hides her, never to rise again.

Sonnet VIII

NOW that the moonlight withers from the sky
Like hope within my heart, what's left to do
But dream alone until the day I die
On some imagined memory of you?
Believe there was a day when for a space
I looked into your unaverted eyes
To feel my spirit awake at their embrace
Articulate and beautiful and wise?
Or dream I hear your voice in the dim pause
Of dawn, ere birds awake, and feel your hand
Seek mine, when some night-fancy overawes
Your gentle thoughts, knowing I understand?
Better to falsify you thus and rest
Than know myself forever dispossessed.

The Enchanted Heart

HERE blew winter once with the snowstorms spurning
Hill and furrow and field till all were whitened;
Here it was the robin flew away frightened
When I went by dreaming of spring returning.

Now that I walk on self-same meadow and hill
Why seems winter the fairer, happier season,
And spring the very root of the mind's unreason?
Why do I ponder and roam unhappily still?

What do you lack today that you lacked not then,
O brooding heart, that you cannot be contented?
Far away, says the heart that was enchanted,
Long ago . . . in a dream . . . O never again!

Envoi

HAS Happiness still one hope to hang upon?
Come then, my heart, while time is left to doubt
What follows: we've our long accounts to con
For the last time before the fire goes out.

Never before tonight on you and me
Glimmered the flame so faintly from the hearth;
And that's a parable of our poetry
Told in such words as mock us from the earth.

It's like the broken promise of Love's bright eyes
When youth's eternity snaps at twenty-four,
And there's an end to golden enterprise
And April thrills the once fierce blood no more.

Aye! It's like us who take our slow farewell
Of Love and the dead Muse now boyhood's over,
And not a spark is left behind to tell
Of Davison, the poet or the lover.

The Letters

I HAVE tied in the box with a rough twine of string
Her many letters to me, the hasty and gay
Scrawled in holiday mood, and the pensive lines
Drooping like threads for absence to hang upon,
Days and nights of slow irresolute hope,
So many beads flashing iridian light
On the neck of Time—these and the scattering sparks
Dashed from the fire ere ever the wind had fallen
Or the river sobbed to sleep—I have shut them all in the box.

Her fancies shall people a world within it, and I
Some day, lifting the lid, shall suddenly see
The vague familiar shadows stir in the light—
Cities and hills and fields with rivers between,
And flowers in the fields, and children playing around
With her sweet self in the midst. And whether I'll know
The name of anything then or recognise
The tallest figure of all to be myself,
Me, as her eyes once saw me, I dare not say.

Perhaps when I open the box they will fade away.

Sonnet IX

O TIME be swift to heal this sullen pain,
Make me forgetful as the rivers are
Of the moon's image when the dawn again
Drives from the sky all save the morning star;
Let me keep nothing of my lost delight,
Not so much as a scent to chill my room
With bitter-sweet remembrance; fill the night
With kind oblivious sleep and soundless gloom.

So in a little while may I awaken
To the bright world and live, being wise to bless
The sun because it lights the road I have taken,
My life because it has conquered bitterness,
My soul because I have held my faith unshaken,
My hope because it was strengthened by distress.

The Gates of Troy

IT is too strong, this proud unyielding love
That tricks our quiet away, to be dismayed
By any tale that Time has rumoured of
Since first men learned how they can be betrayed.

And Cressida's not a warning to the lover
Whose lonely step echoes her story now
At wider gates than Troy's, ere he discover
How the earth darkens at a broken vow.

The Backwater

(*A Pastiche*)

UNDER the overhanging bough
Whose drownéd shadow filled the pool
We floated. Very dark and cool
It was. The leaves that stung my brow
Had swept her hair, and we had stirred
Some leaf-cup for a tear of dew
Splashed on my cheek before I heard
Her quiet laugh. She leaned and drew
The boat in by an osier, shrank
Under the last low bough, and then
We won to the starlit air again
And softly, softly touched the bank.

Conte Drôlatique

MARY is dead, but other girls contrive
To tell her lover he is still alive,
And he's too weary now to disbelieve them,
Yet not convinced enough to undeceive them.

Therefore it's Rose and Phillis, Betty and Kate,
Tennis and golf, dinner and dancing late,
And, after midnight, the long climb to bed,
With the clock's tick repeating *Mary is dead!*

The Girl Remembers Her Dead Lover....

OFTEN with damper paper, sticks and straw
I have made shift ere now to build a fire:
There have been other mornings chill and raw
As this is, yet not one when dry desire
Smouldered so heavily in breast and limb,
Smouldered so heavily because of him.

The matches flare and splutter. Flame by flame
The thick smoke smothers them: their stubs are strewn
About the hearth. We play an ugly game,
Despair and I, frozen in brain and bone,
With dabbled fingers dicing all around
In yesterday's grey ashes on the ground.

How cold it is! This fire will never light,
And presently the house will be astir
With breakfast still to cook and nothing right,
And all to do, though I am wearier
Than after a week's work or a long fever . . .
Would it were over and done with now and forever.

A Leavetaking

I SHALL forget. It is not long
Till I, for all the vows we made,
That she's forgotten, shall be strong
Enough to laugh at all we said.
I'll hear her banished name that rang
Like happiness, without a pang.

But still in woods we used to roam
The leaves will fall, the sunlight break
The solid shadows on the loam
Where she and I would overtake
Less urgent lovers: she and I
Never again will pass them by.

By men whose moods are one with mine
In other woods when eve begins
Shall I be seen. The light will pine
From oak to beech as silence spins
The silken darkness like a net.
—I shall not know that I forget!

Notes for an Envoi to X

HARVEST is over now, all but the moon.
The mists begin. Only a few late sheaves
In the last field, like ghosts of other harvests,
Await the gatherer. They are not forgotten:
The same strong arms that all the afternoon
Lifted their fellows to the sun will carry
These to their barn tomorrow. I shall pass
Another night by this dim stubblefield
When not a stook remains, and late October
Looks on the earth forgetful of the summer
As I already had forgotten it.

. . . . . .

I am alone and have grown weary now
Of watching the brown earth, the fields and trees
We loved; my youth is harvested in rain.
I have learned the long, long waste of growth, the old
Futility that hinders even tears.
And yet, recalling thee, I wander again
Unhappy and restless from my fire at home
To gaze across the twilight through the mist
Upwards to find that star by which we vowed,

Fearfully, our high faith a life ago,
And know not whether in other English fields
Thou roamest now, or if beyond these shores,
In countries where my yet untravelled eyes
Have never looked on eve, its light gleams now
Unrecognised by thee or unremembered.
But O, wherever thou art tonight, if souls
Can speak to one another over the void
I have heard thine speak and I have answered it.
Here in among these desolate fields of Autumn
And the wreathing mists and all that fills the twilight
With the old unhappy sense of loss, my spirit
Has risen above the moment, above grief
And long resentment, crying aloud to thee!

. . . . . .

Let the harsh gods that have denied us gaze
Upon me, gaze upon my strength and glory,
The bridled beauty of this imagination
That dwells upon thee still: and let them gaze
Also on thee, upon thy body's splendour,
Its grace and comeliness for which I have yearned
Because it seemed thy spirit visible
And tangible. Aye! let them gaze and scorn!

We two shall never on one another feed,
Never together in one embrace be joined
In house or field or by the cliffs of the sea
While there is Spring or Summer, Autumn or Winter
To visit and colour these acres of the earth.

. . . . . .

We shall but hear and shrink to hear arising
Each in our separate lives through the dark night
The still accusing cry of the unborn.

The Snare

(*For Henry Seidel Canby*)

FAR away and long ago
This trouble at my heart began:
Ere Eden perished like a flower,
Or Eve had shed her tears an hour,
Or Adam knew himself a man,
In every leaf of every tree
Beauty had set a snare for me.

Far away and long ago
Her loveliest song began to chime.
Bright Hector fell, and at the stroke
Ten thousand hearts like mine awoke
In every age and every clime.
She stood bestriding Time and Space
Amid the stars, and lit the rose
With scent and colour, and she chose
My country for a dwelling place,
And set a snare in every tree
Awaiting me, awaiting me!

Any Boy to His First Love

MY dear, you will remember this
When some new lover leans to kiss
The lips that vowed by star and tree
Never to turn away from me.
You will remember that fair time
When our new love began to climb
And took the stars by force and sang
Till all the heaven around us rang.
You will remember, but not tell,
How this delight of ours befell,
And how incredulous we were
That love could wither in a year,
Or lips so brave as ours find breath
To cry a truce to aught save Death.
You will not tell a word of this
Most miserable cowardice
That might proclaim how life belies
The promises in Beauty's eyes.
But he will kiss your eyes and hair
And see your face and find you fair
Till Lethe flows through breast and limb
And you forget me, loving him.

Till the Hearth Darkens

SORROW burns low tonight,
The house is still
Wherein we sat, I and the woman
Who loved me ill.

She never will come again to sit
Here at my side,
Nor I lean to her bosom's peace
Whatever betide.

Others will steal from the dark world
Into my heart
While she, unheedful, a life's journey
Travels apart.

But I shall remember till grief no longer
With me abides,
Till the hearth darkens and us two nothing
Joins or divides.

Sonnet X

WHEN the bright sun whereon my soul depended
Set, and Heaven fell from where it used to be,
I turned to thee, my Muse, I turned to thee,
Whose sheltering breast receives the unbefriended.
Far off, serene, I saw thee, Mother splendid,
Robed in the shining night to welcome me,
The faithless, fleeing from infidelity,
The sleeper waking when his dream was ended.

So unto thee I turned, and thou didst lean
Above me from the dark but starry throne
Of Time, and the far murmur rose and fell
From choirs that ranged thy silence all unseen,
Muted by distance, softer than the tone
Of the seven oceans singing in a shell.

Sonnet XI

AS if a flower should blossom in the snow,
Some rose miraculous, surprising sight,
Whose beauty in a moment of despite
Winter's chill heart relenting bore, although
When he beheld and felt the sudden glow
Of warmth and colour, breathing scent and light,
He feared the moment of midsummer's height
That filled his air with dreams of overthrow.

So has it been with my old innocence
That more than once rebloomed in some wild hour
When winterlike unfaith ruled flesh and blood,
Dungeoning heart and brain and conscience.
Then have I nipped the stem and chilled the bud
With icy breath, and ruined all the flower.

Happy Was I - - -

WHEN the dead man opens his eyes
On bluer rivers and clearer skies,
On brighter flowers in fields more green
Than any the sun he loved has seen:

What will he say seeing Beauty there
Fairer than ever and yet less fair
Because the hunger and hope no more
Prey on his heart as they did before?

"Happy was I till the perfect tree
Spread bough and foliage over me,
And shook to the grass beside my foot
The lovely, pined-for, ideal fruit.

"Would there were hope of the grave again
Whose mystery baffled the minds of men;
Better the apples my own trees bore . . .
I would that the worm were at the core!"

The Cry to Death

"COME Death (I cried) and take me!" Far
away
I heard the sea break softly down the bay,
I saw the stars and felt the quiet wind,
Sound, sight and feeling told me I had sinned.

What if Death heard and set an hour apart
To answer the cry soon, ere summer's close,
And then tomorrow my Love should open her
heart
And turn to mine? And the wind sighed
"Suppose!"

Failure

NOW once again my hand has failed my heart;
All that I do belies me; all I planned
Has gone amiss—my life, my love, my art,
And very soon my heart will fail my hand.

The Call

THE sun goes down beyond the purple fell,
A wind has blown the lark into a cloud:
One backward look will serve to say farewell
To the dark valley that my fathers ploughed.

The house they built is empty. I must go
Over the twilit moorland till I find
The breast of eve where I may learn to know
What thing it is that gives men peace of mind.

The last light trembles in the farther air,
This is the night, the hour I dare not lose;
A hand has beckoned me, I know not where,
A voice has spoken but I know not whose.

Sonnet XII

The Seagull

(For Natalie)

A THOUSAND seagulls in the setting sun
Burst from the marsh, wheeling with harsh outcry
Down to the sea. Some watcher of the sky
Followed the flight of that unhappy one
Whose breast first caught the beams, and raised his gun:
Like Lucifer who once with baffled cry
Soared short of heaven's edge (for the Most High
Smote his wide pinions when they brightest shone),
So, stricken, sharp against the rim she stop't
With broken wing and on her breast a wound
Where the keen ray had stained her glowed the more
To feel that probe of light. Then while she drop't
The sun grew suddenly dark; but still the sound
Of guns re-echoed down the lonely shore.

The Old Women Hear the Young Girls Singing in April

FEATHERLIGHT, tiptoe on the air of April,
Innocent ones, dance on, by us, alas!
Ungreeted. —We are old and know December,
Our orchards blossom in the heart of the fire,
Wherein we gaze the deeper for your singing
Remembering other voices, other springs.
O all too soon the grief will come upon you,
Beautiful dancers! Under the cherry boughs,
It may be, long before their blossom sprinkles
Petals upon your hair; some glance, some tone,
Or trick of light or shade on a stranger's face
Will change you all and cheat you of your peace.
You will be led in secret through the twilight,
Half-frightened, leaning on that lover's arm,
Unconscious of the path. The fragrant leafage
Darkening, closing wall and roof, around you
Will never hide your delicate sweet limbs
From the wild eyes or the light straying hands
That lure you trembling into ecstasy.
Already you will weep and burn and shudder;
And after that the chill, the grey dawnlight
And you will never be the same again
Though you seek innocence all over the world.

We know, we know, who have searched the mirror's heart
For our own forms and found them where the flame
Has sunk and left an empty burning pit
This dark fire. But our lovers are not there.

At the "Plough and Anchor"

JAN CASPAR, the drunken sailor,
The broken-nosed disgrace
Of fifty ports—Jan Caspar
Home from the China shore
With a sword-slash down his face,
Knows Cancer and Capricorn
Where we shall never see
Strange stars riding the topmast
Of a tall ship under sail.
For we shall never round the Horn,
Or call for wine in Mexico,
Or get dead drunk in a roaring gale,
Never, never take lines to cast
For spiky fish in the dead calm
Of a lonely archipelago.

"I seen the sea-sarpint," (says Jan)
"But he didn't do us no harm;
He were fatter'n twenty farrowin' sows
An' longer'n Maypole Street
With a mouth nearly the size of a house
An' fins as big as a man.
You oughter seen him when he beat
Alongside, wrigglin' like a worm,

Frettin' and foamin'—he were fine,
Eatin' salt pork and makin' a storm
With playin' round the ship all day
One time we crossed the line."

Jan sits and talks at the inn door,
He sees the boats go by
At evening over the quiet harbour
Till they fade away in the sky—
"I'm sailin' again myself," (says Jan)
"Come the middle of July."

But we shall never cross the wide Pacific,
Or gaze at sunset on its bright sea-gardens,
Catching the flying fish with naked hands,
Or kiss a girl beneath the Spanish sky,
Or anchor at Tunis or in Jamaica harbour,
Being old landsmen who are ripe to die.

Labrador

LABRADOR . . . Labrador . . . Labrador!

The names of things are bones in open graves
Of dreamers' minds . . . They rise and take on
flesh
Mockingly challenging Reality
When Time is ready, but thou wert unprepared,
O thousand times belied Imagination.

Bastard of Apprehension and Unreason,
Deceiver and Betrayer, Breaker of Faith,
Remember how, after the Autumn voyage,
Dawn drew a thin line down the faint horizon
And pricked three lights out, far in the low sky,
When I heard beneath the shadow of the boats
A girl's voice murmur softly *Labrador!*

The dim haze lifted as the morning grew
Around the sea. I looked to Labrador.
I sought for the high mountains of my dream,
The white precipitous cliffs and flowing rivers,
The snowy wastes and glaciers of that name . . .
Labrador . . . Labrador . . . Labrador!
No more my Labrador! For the sun rose

On wooded hills, tilled land and fields of green,
And one small village with a squatting spire
Amid its clustering houses, and their smoke
Wreathed up and melted in familiar blue
Beyond the pines. The '*Alaunia*' ploughed on.

The Journey

TWILIGHT had chilled the world, and soon
The path grew dim from tree to tree,
But three dream-spirits guided me
Into a night without a moon.

The first, that rode a silver steed,
Was my too-long-neglected Muse
Who beckoned, and I could not choose
But follow where she seemed to lead.

The second was my Love—that Love
Who swore long since to be my bride:
The third was part of me that died
When she belied the stars above.

In a thin mist the whole night long
We journeyed, and I wept the while,
For one had a most lovely smile,
And one was singing a sweet song.

But one kept moaning as we went
To hear me weep. My strength was spent.

Then we beheld the breaking day,
And the White Rider rode away.

Presently my Love looked back
And fled upon our trodden track.

The thing that moaned beheld her go
And followed mournfully and slow.

But I, being weary, only crept
Beneath a leafy bough and slept.

Sonnet XIII

In Memoriam, W. H. B.

THE soul outworn that roamed so far afield
These sixty years will nevermore return
To light those eyes wherein it used to burn,
Or scorch the heart its final loss has healed:
Through some dim outlet by the night revealed
The escaper slip't, and nothing need we mourn
Of that fair flight unless it be to yearn
For the Farewell that now he cannot yield.

So some old ship, too often tempest-tried,
Sails within sight of harbour and offshore
Drops anchor till the dawn; but in her hold
The beams burst open to the lapping tide
And there she founders and is seen no more,
And the sea takes her gems and all her gold.

Harvest Over

FAREWELL Swallow, for England darkens now,
October's chill begins; even the creepers
Redden, stripping their tendrils to the gust
Of Autumn. You must fly—whither or how
We scarcely know, save that a host of sleepers
Will wake in other dawns than ours to hear
Your twitter in their eaves, for you may trust
To find a kinder sun than lights our waning year.

We shall await you till another spring
Recalls you to these gardens that you haunted,
The winter-beaten nests in the wet eaves,
And the south walls you loved: for you would bring
Out of their crannies chips and straws, undaunted
By the wide-open windows where we sat
To watch you build among the budding leaves
Cunninger nests than those we found and marvelled at.

But now the long days dwindle and our hearts
Are heavy with a strange Autumnal sorrow,
Old hints of grief, of age, mortality

Beyond your knowing; and our subtlest arts
Carry us no far further than tomorrow
When one, the earliest out, shall come to tell
How you have flown away from us, and we
Will listen to him in silence . . . Swallow, fare-
well!